

DETAILED ACTION

1. This communication is a First Action Non-Final on the merits. Claims 1-20, as originally filed, are currently pending and have been considered below.

Specification

2. The specification is objected to as failing to provide proper antecedent basis for the claimed subject matter. See 37 CFR 1.75(d)(1) and MPEP § 608.01(o). Correction of the following is required: Claim 11 recites the limitation "system set up interface". The specification in this closure fails to provide proper antecedent basis for the limitation in this claim.

Claim Objections

3. Claim 2 is objected to because of the following informalities: Applicant recites the limitation *.cvs. This appears to be a typo. Examiner interprets the intended meaning of this limitation to be *.csv as recited in the specification. Appropriate correction is required.

4. Claim 10 is objected to because of the following informalities: Claim 10 is listed as dependent upon itself. For examination purposes, Examiner will treat claim 10 as dependent upon claim 4. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

5. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the

applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

6. Claims 4, 5, 10, 12, 16, and 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Yu (2002/0120535).

As per claim 4, Yu discloses “A system of automated repair and control operation, comprising: a plurality of hierarchical interfaces, of which at least one comprises a series of returned product and at least one is functionally capable of receiving each input returned product” (Abstract discloses different interfaces for three parties to receive and exchange data pertaining to a request for a return).

As per claim 5, Yu discloses “the hierarchical interfaces comprise an RMA NO Generation interface, creating an RMA number according to the received returned product and adding, inquiring as to, or editing RMA data returned product for requirements” (Fig 8, upper right, and ¶ 78 discloses a RMA processor that generates a RMA confirmation page that displays an RMA number).

As per claim 10, Yu discloses an online return and exchange process having a “the hierarchical interfaces comprise a Package Order interface, packaging the repaired returned product and inquiring as to or editing the RMA data for requirements” (Figs. 12 and 13 and ¶ 79 discloses a shipping interface that displays packaging and shipping information that allows for the input of additional information or editing of information).

As per claim 12, Yu discloses “the hierarchical interfaces comprise a Report interface, outputting reports of the RMA data” (¶ 80 discloses an interface that provides several different RMA reports).

As per claim 16, Yu discloses “the hierarchical interfaces comprise a plurality of drop-down menus, displaying a plurality of RMA numbers, inquiring repair conditions for the returned product” (Fig. 11 and ¶ 79 discloses an RMA closing interface having a RMA NO. drop-down menu having the ability to display a plurality of RMA numbers for different return products and also displaying the broken symptom and repair result for each respective part/product, where the broken symptom and repair result represent the repair conditions for the returned products).

As per claim 17, Yu discloses “the hierarchical interfaces comprise at least one date menu, displaying all received RMA numbers within a period” (Fig 9 and ¶ 78 discloses an RMA list that displays RMA requests received between 10/15/200 and 12/18/2000) .

7. Claims 18 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Yashiro et al. (2003/0033260).

As per claim 18, Yashiro et al. discloses “A system of automated repair and control operation, comprising: a database storage system” (¶ 60 discloses a database management system);

“and a plurality of hierarchical interfaces related to returned product, directly or indirectly communicating with the database storage system, in which at least one interface comprises at least a modifiable data input field, modifying the returned product stored in the database storage system” (Figs 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15A, and 17 disclose interfaces relating to returned products. Fig 5 comprises modifiable consumer data and product data input fields. A database stores this information)

As per claim 20, Yashiro et al. discloses “the hierarchical interfaces comprise a Repair interface, including repair information of the returned product, entered in corresponding fields and then recorded in the database storage system” (¶ 64; via an operator inputs certain core information concerning the returned product, which is then used by the server to create a unique record for the product that is stored in the database, and Fig15A/¶ 140-1162 discloses a repair detail entry screen/interface that allows the operator to input details pertaining to the repair of the returned product).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

8. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

9. Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hauser et al. (6,536,659) in view of Examiner’s Official Notice.

As per claim 1, Hauser et al. discloses “A method of automated repair and control operation, comprising steps of:

creating an RMA number after receiving an RMA request form for returned product” (Fig 1 discloses where the merchant receives a return request [12] and where a Return authorization label is generated [18] and col. 4, line 17-20 discloses the generation of a return authorization shipping label containing a bar code that identifies the merchant authorizing the return and including any other information that is relevant to processing the return of the merchandise, where a bar code represents a number

and where the examiner is construing the barcode containing return authorization information to be a return authorization barcode/number);

“uploading RMA data of the returned product to a database of a factory information system and then verifying the RMA data” (col. 4 line 3-5 discloses transmitting return data to return system and col. 4, line 60 discloses verifying that the RMA data matches the contents received from the customer);

“and packaging and shipping the repaired returned product” (col. 7 line 46-47 discloses repackaged/refurbished returned merchandise is shipped).

Hauser et al., However fails to disclose “checking whether claimed defects of the returned product are accurate; repairing the returned product according to the claimed defects with correct checking thereof; and inspecting the returned product to ensure that the repair step is complete”. Examiner takes Official Notice that it is old and well known in the art of return and repairs that when items are returned by a customer claiming certain defects or malfunctions with the equipment, such items are checked to ensure that the claimed defects of the returned product are accurate, repaired according to the accurately claimed defects, and inspected to ensure that the repair step is complete.

For example, if a customer purchases a new cellular phone and the LCD screen on the cellular device cracks the customer may want to return the phone back to the manufacturer to be repaired. Upon receiving the cell phone the manufacturer will check to make sure that the LCD screen is, in fact, cracked before any necessary repairs of the LCD screen would take place. Once it is verified that the LCD screen does need to be repaired, the manufacturer would proceed to repair the screen. When the repair is

complete it would be inspected to ensure that it is, in fact, repaired before the cell phone is returned back to the customer.

Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the pertinent art at the time the invention was made to modify the facilitation of returns of Hauser et al. to include checking and repairing claimed defects and inspecting the repaired product as taught by Examiner's Official Notice in order to facilitate the proper handling of returns.

10. Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hauser et al. in view of Examiner's Official Notice as applied to claim 1 above and further in view of Anonymous (1999) in view of Microsoft (1999).

As per claim 2, the Hauser et al. and Official Notice Combination discloses all of the elements of the claimed invention but fails to explicitly disclose "Data files of the returned product, comprising *.xls files, are converted to readable files, comprising *.csv, compatible with an RMA system".

Anonymous discloses *.csv and *.xls files (col. 3, ¶ 1; via users can also save documents in CSV and XLS formats).

Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the pertinent art at the time the invention was made to modify the facilitation of returns of Hauser et al. to include the *.csv and *.xls files as taught by anonymous since such files are commonly used file formats.

Microsoft discloses file conversion (pg. 112, conversion; via types of conversion include file [changing from one file format to another]).

Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the pertinent art at the time the invention was made to modify the facilitation of returns of the Hauser et al. and Anonymous combination to include the file conversion as taught by Microsoft in order to allow unreadable file formats to be converted into file formats that are readable by the return system.

11. Claims 3 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hauser in view of Examiner's Official Notice as applied to claim 1 above and further in view of Yu.

As per claim 3, the Houser et al. and Official Notice combination discloses all of the elements of the claimed invention but fails to explicitly disclose "RMA data of the returned product comprises at least a customer number".

Yu discloses an online return and exchange process having a "customer number" (Abstract discloses a user ID code, where a user ID code represents a customer number). Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the pertinent art at the time the invention was made to modify the facilitation of returns of the Hauser et al. and Official Notice combination to include the "user ID" as taught by Yu since such would further facilitate the return process by making it easier to identify customers.

12. Claims 6, 7, 8, and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yu in view of Kumar et al. (7,249,044).

As per claim 6, Yu discloses all of the elements of the claimed invention but fails to explicitly disclose “the hierarchical interfaces comprise an Upload interface, uploading RMA data to the database and adding, inquiring as to, or editing the RMA data for requirements”.

Kumar discloses a fulfillment management system having an “Upload interface” (col. 36, line 24-26 discloses a data interface that may allow a supplier to upload new information about a product).

Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the pertinent art at the time the invention was made to modify the online return and repair process of Yu to include the upload interface as taught by Kumar et al. since such would create an easy way to input pertinent information regarding returned products into the return system.

As per claim 7, Yu further discloses “the hierarchical interfaces comprise a Quality Control Data Sorting interface, checking claimed defects of the returned product and inquiring as to, or editing the RMA data for requirements” (Fig 8 discloses a RMA request screen displaying the fault descriptions of the returned products and ¶ 58 discloses a system of sharing repair data with other parties in the using the system where the repair data includes broken symptoms/ failure descriptions of the returned products).

As per claim 8, Yu further discloses “wherein the hierarchical interfaces comprise a Repair interface, recovering the claimed defects of the returned product and inquiring as to or editing the RMA data if necessary” (¶ 56 discloses a website interface

containing RMA numbers and associated failure descriptions where the user may input/edit data about the product).

As per claim 9, Yu further discloses "the hierarchical interfaces comprise a Quality Control Inspection interface, determining whether the claimed defects is changed and inquiring as to or editing the RMA data for requirements" (Fig. 11 and ¶ 79 discloses an RMA closing interface displaying the broken system and repair result for each respective part/product, where the broken symptoms represent the claimed defects and the repair result shows the status of the repairs and whether or not the status of the claimed defects has changed).

13. Claims 11, 14, and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yu and further in view of Yashiro et al.

As per claim 11, Yu discloses all of the elements of the claimed invention but fails to explicitly disclose "the hierarchical interfaces comprise a system setup interface, creating suitable settings for the RMA data in accordance with different processes".

Yashiro et al. discloses a method and system of facilitating the repair of inoperable products having a "system set up interface" (Fig 5 and ¶ 69 discloses a web page interface where the operator enters information about the product so as to set up the return account for that particular return product).

Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the pertinent art at the time the invention was made to modify the online return and repair process of Yu to include the "system set up interface" as taught by Yashiro et al. since such would

facilitate the return process by allowing an operator to set up the system according to the return information available.

As per claim 14, Yu discloses “displaying all returned product” (Fig 9 discloses an RMA list of returned products).

Yu, however, fails to disclose a “drop-down menu”. Yashiro et al. discloses a method and system of facilitating the repair of inoperable products having a “drop down menu” (§ 72 discloses a pull-down menu).

Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the pertinent art at the time the invention was made to modify the online return and repair process of Yu to include the drop-down menu as taught by Yashiro et al. since such would facilitate the efficient data input of the return system.

As per claim 15 Yu discloses all of the elements of the claimed invention but fails to explicitly disclose “the hierarchical interfaces comprise a damage condition editing section, including all damage conditions for the returned product”.

Yashiro et al. discloses a method and system of facilitating the repair of inoperable products having “the hierarchical interfaces comprise a damage condition editing section, including all damage conditions for the returned product” (Fig 15A and ¶ 142 discloses a repair detail entry screen that allows the servicing operator to enter technical comments regarding the condition of the product, the type of repair performed and the manner in which the product malfunction manifests itself, where the condition of the product represents the damage condition of the product).

Therefore it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the pertinent art at the time the invention was made to modify the online return and repair process of Yu to include the damage condition editing section as taught by Yashiro et al. since such would ensure that all defects are properly documented.

14. Claim 13 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yu and further in view of Thompson et al. (2003/0061104).

As per claim 13, Yu discloses all of the elements of the claimed invention but fails to explicitly disclose "the hierarchical interfaces comprise at least a Main Menu label and a Modify label, returning to the main interface and modifying related data of the returned product, separately".

Thompson et al. discloses an internet based warranty and repair service having a "main menu label and a modify label returning to the main interface and modifying related data of the returned product" (Figs 3-4 and ¶ 57-58 discloses a personalized home page interface, which examiner is construing to be a main menu interface for the customer, on this interface is an edit label which allows the customer to modify information pertaining to their returned product. There is also an update personal information link/label that allows the customer to modify their personal information as well. Examiner is construing the edit label and update personal information label to serve as modify labels).

Therefore it is obvious to one of ordinary skill in the pertinent art at the time the invention was made to modify the online return and repair process of Yu to include the

main menu and modify labels as taught by Thompson et al. since such would allow the operator to easily navigate and edit the online system.

15. Claim 19 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yashiro and further in view of Thompson et al.

As per claim 19, Yashiro et al. discloses all of the elements of the claimed invention but fails to explicitly disclose "customer numbers of the returned product stored in a database storage system".

Thompson et al. discloses a internet based warranty and repair system having "customer numbers of the returned product that are uploaded to the database storage system" (§ 14 discloses that customer data is stored in a database and a client identifier is assigned, where the client identifier represents a customer number and where the client identifier along with the customer number is stored within the database storage system).

Therefore it would be obvious to one of ordinary skill in the pertinent art at the time the invention was made to modify the online return and repair process of Yu to include the customer numbers stored in a database storage system as taught by Thompson et al. since such would allow operators of the system to easily identify the customers using the online return and repair system.

Conclusion

16. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Junger (6,085,172) discloses an apparatus for efficient handling of product return transactions. Junger et al. (2004/0172260) discloses a method and

apparatus for enabling purchasers of products to obtain return information online. Stenz (6,754,637) discloses a method and apparatus to manage network based return processing). Wallis et al. (2001/0051884) discloses a method and system for controlling warranty-related data and services. Rogers et al. (6,018,719) discloses an electronic registration system for product transactions. Chiu et al. (2003/0046180) discloses a method and system for processing return product.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to CANDICE D. CARTER whose telephone number is (571)270-5105. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday (7:30-5:00) with First Fridays off.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Lynda Jasmin can be reached on (572) 272-3033. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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